

This newsletter presents monthly highlights of EPF's and our member parliamentary groups' work and gives an overview of legislative and Parliamentary initiatives on sexual and reproductive health and rights and international development in Europe and around the world on the part of the global community of Parliamentarians committed to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Enjoy the reading!

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I. EPF Activities July/August 2009

1. Young Decision Makers Study Tour on Reproductive Health Supplies brings Young Decision Makers to Uganda

1-8 August 2009



A delegation of 9 European Young Decision Makers in leadership positions within various youth political parties and representing politically active young Europeans participated in a study tour to Uganda (1-8 August 2009). The aim of the trip was to study the unmet needs in reproductive health supplies and services in Uganda and the resulting impact on global human development.

During their stay, the delegation had the opportunity to get an insight into different aspects of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) situation in the country. They visited the Mulago hospital, various reproductive health clinics and AIDS projects in Kampala as well as in Mbarara. The participants also met and discussed SRHR issues with districts health officers, representatives of the Uganda AIDS Commission, Members of the Parliament, young politicians from Uganda, as well as with UN Agencies, European donors, NGOs operating in the country and finally the Minister of Health.

The group, which was composed of delegates from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Russia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, was very pleased to be given the opportunity to visit Uganda. However, the young decision makers are concerned about the situation of maternal health, access to family planning and reproductive health supplies, as well as the low level of health system funding in the country.

Whilst encouraging the government of Uganda and its development partners to step up their efforts in addressing reproductive health issues in the country, the delegation also acknowledges that the case of Uganda reflects the remaining



important needs and challenges faced by the global community for the achievement of the reproductive health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There is a need for increased global focus in this area.



Upon their return, the delegation will take up the lessons learnt in the field to promote the global necessity of investing in reproductive health services and supplies as an essential precondition to reach the development objectives agreed on at international level. It is crucial to continue to advocate for increased cooperation and accountability in development and to strengthen civil society in developing countries for the eradication of global poverty.



The tour was organised by the Danish Family Planning Association, Sex & Samfund, and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF), within the framework of Countdown 2015 Europe, a European advocacy project aiming at raising awareness about the unmet needs in sexual and reproductive health services and supplies in developing countries. It enjoyed the active support of Reproductive Health Uganda, the Ugandan Member Association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) acting as host and providing contacts with local organisations and institutions.

For more information contact: Saskia Pfeijffer, EPF Programme Associate at: Saskia@iepfpd.org

2. EPF Executive Committee designates new interim President

On 10 July, EPF held an extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting in the EPF Offices in Brussels. Key outcomes were:

- The designation of EPF Vice President Swedish MP Carina Hägg as the President of EPF until the elections of a new Executive Committee which will be organised during EPF's Council meeting to take place in Addis Ababa in October 2009 along with the International Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD (IPCI). As a result of the European Parliament's election, MEP Anne van Lancker has unfortunately not been re-elected and consequently has to step down. The Executive Committee members and EPF Secretariat sincerely thanked MEP Anne van Lancker for the key role she played as EPF President and in the European Parliament as Chair of the EPWG, being among the strongest and most active advocates for advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the political agenda.
- A discussion on the implications of the new EU political landscape on the advancement and promotion of SRHR as well as for meeting the health-related MDGs. Referring to the European Parliament (EP) election results and to the actual balance of power at Member State level, the Executive Committee members pointed out the emergence of a centre right/conservative majority across Europe. The Executive Committee members agreed that the best strategy requires building new allies and strengthening the involvement of centre-right Parliamentarians in SRHR/Development topics.
- A strategic discussion on the upcoming IPCI Meeting to be held on 27-28 October 2009 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Members of the Executive Committee agreed on criteria for selecting the EPF Delegation of 40 Parliamentarians, as well as criteria for the participation of European Parliamentarians not members of EPF and non parliamentarians to the IPCI. The Executive Committee members also agreed to hold an EPF Council meeting and organise a mini study tour on SRHR in Ethiopia around IPCI.

3. EPF MP participates in IAPG Council Meeting in Caracas

The Inter-American Parliamentary Group (IAPG), the American sister network of EPF, invited EPF as an observer to its IV Council meeting that took place on 27-28 July in Caracas, Venezuela. Spanish MP Antonia García Valls represented EPF in the meeting. She was asked to address the forum about the experiences of European parliamentarians working with SRHR. Her speech about the work of EPF, the parliamentary groups and more particularly, the work of the Spanish APPG was very well received. Representatives from civil society, IPPF and UNFPA were also present. Parliamentarians had the chance to visit the parliament and were welcomed by the president of the Venezuelan parliament during a plenary session.

With very similar statutes as EPF, IAPG holds a Council meeting in order to appraise past activities and propose future activities of the parliamentary network. The network has recently expanded and representatives from parliamentary groups in Canada, the Dominican Republic and Panama requested for membership during the meeting. The EPF delegation was able to learn about the situation, activities, and challenges from each country. This year's session was dominated with references to ICPD at 15 and the upcoming IPCI conference in Addis Ababa. It was widely regretted that Latin-America, despite of being the region with the most unequal distribution of wealth in the world, has been categorized as middle income region, thus an important part of ODA flows have been diverted to countries that may be poorer on average but have less social exclusion.

One of the most significant outcomes was the decision to create an American network of committed MPs to promote MDG 5, the reduction of maternal mortality and access to family planning. The objective of this network is to encounter opposition movements and parliamentarians that had been particularly successful in some countries of the region to roll back sexual and reproductive health and rights and to promote comprehensive and accessible family planning and reproductive health services. The structure and functioning of this platform will be further defined in future IAPG meetings.

It was also decided to explore the possibilities of holding the next Council meeting in Canada in conjunction with a side event to the G-8 Summit, which will take place next year in Canada.

For more information contact Miguel Ongil, EPF Programme Officer at Miguel@iepfpd.org

II. APPG Affairs

1. Hon. George Tsereteli, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, attended National Youth Reproductive Health Forum

George Tsereteli, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia (4th from left) attended the National Youth Reproductive Health Forum on 7 July. The Forum was organized by the Parliament of Georgia and the Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC), a project co-funded by the European Commission (EC) and UNFPA. Participants of the National Parliamentary and multi-sectoral meeting included representatives of legislative and executive branches, non-governmental organizations, independent experts, field professionals.



In his opening remarks Hon. George Tsereteli, MP thanked the EC and UNFPA for the close collaboration and involvement in the Reproductive Health and Rights implementation in Georgia. The Deputy Chairman also noted that UNFPA projects and Educational Centers are playing a major role in the implementation of the MDGs. He stressed the importance of ongoing close and effective partnership of the Parliament and Ministry of Health with

RHIYC. "Few years ago there were no documents addressing RH policy in the country. Today, Georgia is one of the leaders in the field, which is demonstrated by the strong institutional mechanisms operating in the country and the Forum is one more important step to address the challenges in the field of youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights", the Deputy Chairman explained.

In his presentation, George Tsereteli provided a detailed and comprehensive update on the existing situation of the Youth RH and Rights in Georgia, Government policy, objectives and sustainability strategies. He emphasized the need of further actions in terms of refining and harmonizing Georgian legislation on RH with the international standards, supporting the national youth sexual and reproductive health strategy, providing youth friendly and high quality RH services with sound financial mechanisms and infrastructure in place.

Finally, the Deputy Chairmen expressed hope that remaining challenges addressing the RH and rights of young people will be addressed effectively to ensure successful solutions in the field.

For more information contact Marina Davidashvili, Network and Knowledge Sharing Facilitator Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus at: Marina@iefpd.org

2. UK APPG: "Loss of Overseas Development Assistance to Family Planning is Disastrous for Global Population Growth"

The UK All Party Parliamentary Group has launched the 2009 Update for their Report: "The Return of the Population Growth Factor: Its Impact on the Millennium Development Goals". The update reveals that since original publication family planning has continued to suffer decline, which could put in jeopardy the UN medium population projection in 2050. The findings thus suggest with increasing urgency that the current rates of population growth will make the MDGs difficult or impossible to achieve.

The cross party group of MPs warn that the failure to prioritise family planning in overseas development aid is resulting in population growth levels that present a serious threat to health, economic development and the environment in some of the poorest countries.

Hon. Christine McCafferty MP, the Chair of the Group said: "In 2009, the international development agenda is increasingly focused on global phenomena, including climate change, fragile states and poverty elimination. The relationship between these factors and population growth is clear, but is also complex and controversial."

Global population size in 2050 depends on the availability of family planning programmes in some of the world's poorest countries. The UN median population projection- currently 9.2 billion by 2050- is produced on the assumption that family planning is expanding in availability. However because of lack of investment, many of these programmes are crumbling. "Urgent action must be taken to ensure family planning provision becomes an integral part of all efforts to reduce poverty, improve mothers' and children's survival and health, and to forestall further damage to the natural environment," said Christine McCafferty.



Among the recommendations of the report is for contraceptive supplies to be a top priority as demand continues to outstrip availability and for the elimination of barriers to family planning including cultural and religious restrictions. (See the Annex of this Newsletter for the full list of recommendations)

A full copy of the original Report, the 2009 Update Summary and the 2009 Updated Charts can be viewed at <http://www.appg-popdevrh.org.uk/>

For further information or interviews contact: APPG on PD&RH Adviser Mette Kjaerby on kjaerbym@parliament.uk

III. European Parliament News

1. European Parliament opinion poll analyses 2009 European election turnout

The European Parliament has published a Eurobarometer survey of more than 26 000 people across Europe carried out in the month following the 4-7 June European elections. Citizens were asked about their reasons for choosing whether or not to vote, and, if they did vote, what factors they took into account in deciding which party to vote for. These factors were:

The election information campaigns: More than two-thirds of those surveyed (67 per cent) said they remembered seeing, hearing or reading information material encouraging them to vote. The proportions are similar among different age groups and users of different media.

Views of politics in general: The main reasons cited by non-voters for their choice mainly relate to the wider political climate: a lack of confidence in politics in general (28 per cent), the view that voting makes no difference (17 per cent) or a lack of interest in politics (17 per cent). By contrast, only 10 per cent cited a lack of knowledge of the EU, EP or the elections and just 8 per cent said they were dissatisfied with the EP as an institution.

Socio-demographic factor: The survey indicates that older citizens were more likely to vote than younger ones, and that those who had spent longer in education were more likely to vote than those who left school earlier. Those in senior or professional jobs were more likely to vote than those in low-paid work. The rate of abstention was particularly high (66.1 per cent) among those who say they have problems paying their regular bills.

The whole opinion poll can be found [here](#).

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

IV. EPF Activities – Outlook 2009

1. Fourth International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, 27-28 October 2009, Addis Ababa/Ethiopia

The conference will be combined with an EPF Council meeting as well as a mini study tour and is preceded by a High-level Conference on MDG 5: Maternal Health hosted by the Dutch Minister for Development, H.E. Bert Koenders on 26 October 2009.

2. ICPD at 15 Regional Forum for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Convened by UNFPA, in partnership with the UNECE, the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF), the IPPF, and Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO), this Forum will be held on 12-13 November 2009 in Istanbul/Turkey.

3. Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative (GAVI) Fourth Partners' Meeting, 17-21 November 2009, Hanoi, Vietnam

EPF will be bringing a Parliamentary Delegation to the Alliance's Fourth Partners' Meeting to take place from 18-20 November 2009 and combine it with mini field visits around Hanoi. The event will provide a forum to discuss the role of immunisation in achieving the health Millennium Development Goals, review lessons learned in the first 10 years of GAVI's existence and share best practices. Participants will reflect on the challenges and opportunities ahead, and the way towards fulfilling GAVI's mission to save children's lives and protecting people's health by increasing access to immunisation in poor countries.

V. ANNEX

Recommendations for Action from the 2009 Update for the UK APPG Report on: "The Return of the Population Growth Factor: Its Impact on the Millennium Development Goals".

1. Recognising the International Parliamentarians' target of 10% of Overseas Development Aid for reproductive health, we recommend donor agencies, governments, the World Bank and other development banks must increase their support for family planning. (The update shows a decline in family planning expenditure year by year since 1998, meanwhile funding for STIs including HIV/AIDS has increased dramatically).
2. Ensure availability of contraceptive supplies as a top priority. (Global population continues to grow, however family planning supplies are decreasing. Demand is outstripping supplies).
3. Eliminate the wide range of barriers to family planning. (Religious and cultural opposition to family planning is of concern, as are misinformation campaigns and medical barriers).
4. Provide technical assistance to developing countries' governments to improve capacity to prioritise and monitor the use of available resources for family planning and reproductive health. (Attention is needed to support country plans that include MDG target 5.B: "achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015.")
5. Encourage the development, environment and reproductive health/family planning communities to work together and address the problems caused by rapid population growth. (The update shows that three quarters of the least developed country governments believe that their rate of population growth is too high, civil society organisations must be strengthening at country level to advocate for integrated SRHR /HIV/AIDS services and systems).

The EPF Secretariat

The EPF secretariat is based in Brussels and is responsible for implementing all EPF activities. EPF maintains a website with information about its activities and a monthly News Update on the activities of Parliamentarians, SRHR and development policy and related items. It can be found at www.iepfpd.org.

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EPF's Mission

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development believes Parliamentarians have the opportunity and the responsibility to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality, which are core elements of human dignity and are central to human development.

About EPF

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development is a Brussels-based Parliamentary network that serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination for the 25 all-party groups in Parliaments throughout Europe that focus on improving sexual and reproductive health and rights at home and abroad through national and regional health and foreign aid budgets.

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EPF is a member of:

- The Steering Committee of the International Parliamentarians' Conference of the Implementation of the IPCI Programme of Action (IPCI/ICPD)
- Countdown 2015 Europe
- The Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)
- The European Alliance against Malaria
- The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition
- The Women Deliver Advisory Group

EPF

- has Special Consultative Status with the United Nation's Economic and Social Council
- has Participatory Status with the Council of Europe
- is an Associate Member of EuroNGOs